Wetlands Aren't Wastelands
Hyacinth Beds for Bass

Florida WILDLIFE

Fishing · Hunting · Conservation · Outdoor Recreation

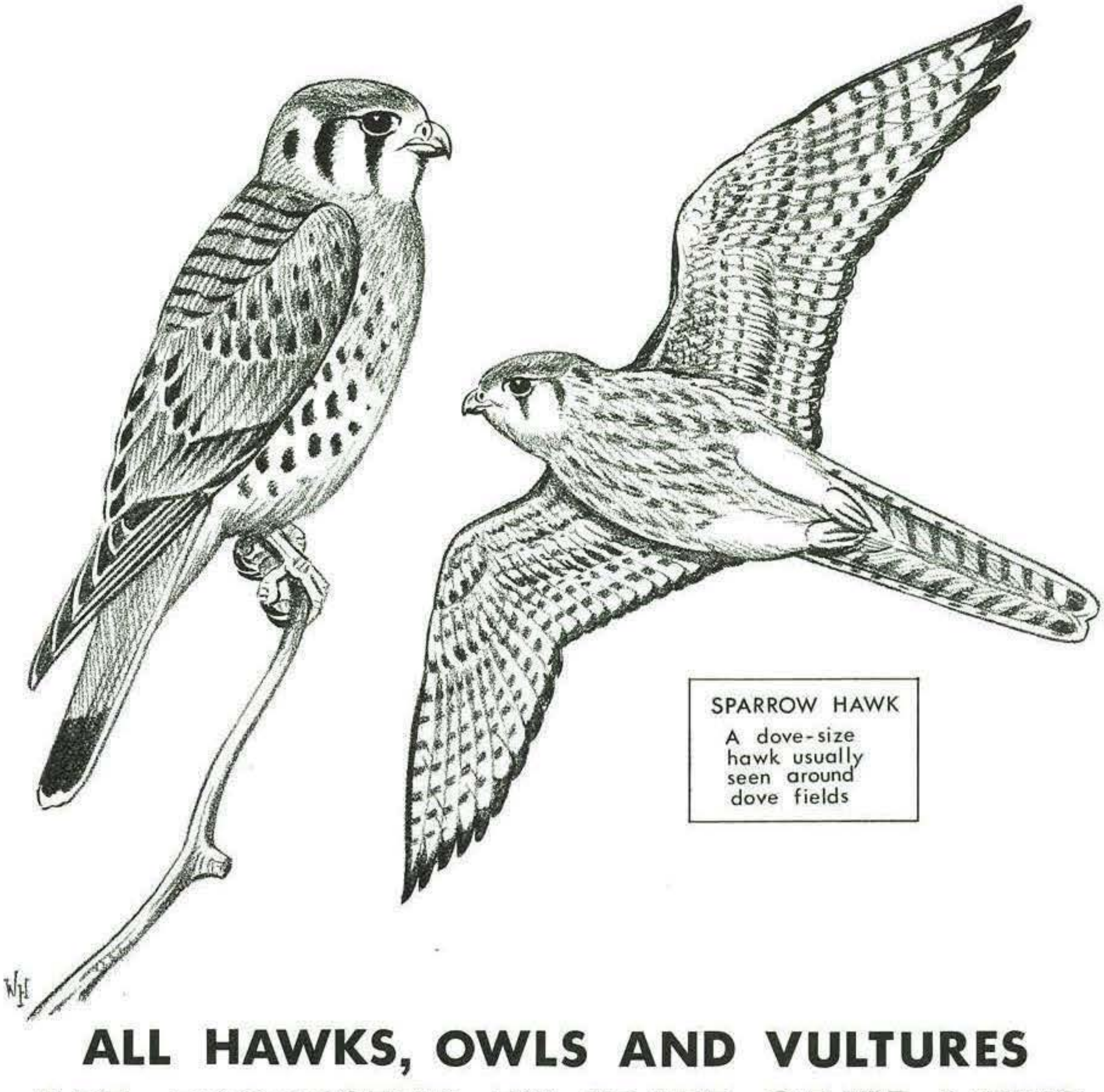
OCTOBER 1971

The Florida Magazine for all Sportsmen

25 CENTS

DON'T SHOOT HAWKS

THESE BENEFICIAL BIRDS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR ENVIRONMENT



SPARROW HAWK

A dove-size hawk usually seen around dove fields

ALL HAWKS, OWLS AND VULTURES ARE PROTECTED BY STATE GAME LAWS

STATE OF FLORIDA
GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

Florida WILDLIFE

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The Cover

Time and "progress" are catching up with the Florida Black Bear. Not yet considered an endangered species, its range is reduced considerably, and it remains a game animal only in a few wilderness areas. See page 4.

Ektachrome Photo By William Greer

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THE BLACK BEAR, mischievous monarch of Florida's remaining—and shrinking—unpopulated places, is in trouble. He hasn't been overhunted. He's not a victim of flood, drought, or fire. No mysterious wildlife disease has decimated his ranks. Yet, he is definitely on a downhill slide.

Incompatibility with man appears to be his undoing.

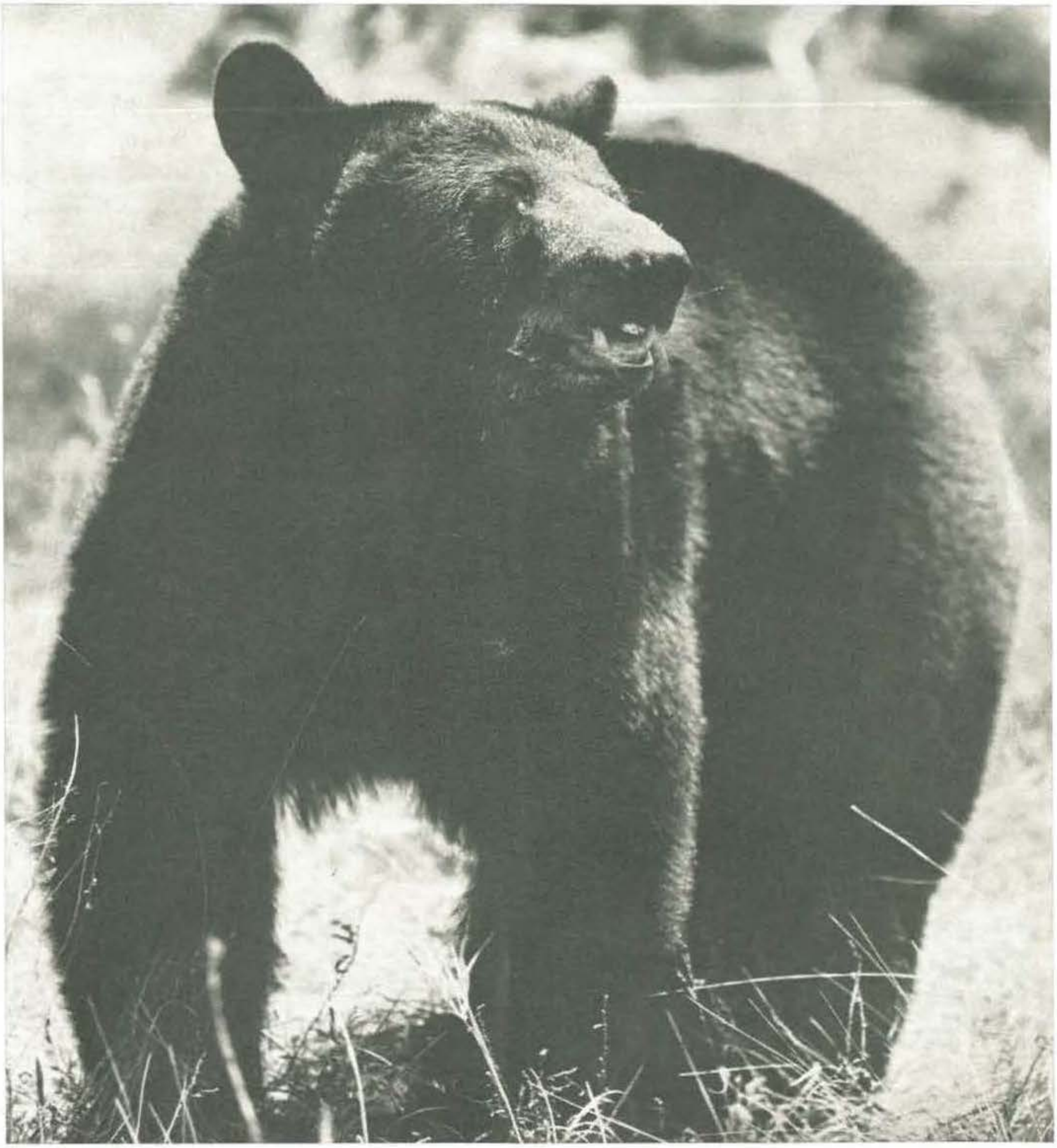
Recent estimates are that the statewide population of the Florida Black Bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) is about one-half what it was just 10 years ago: approximately 1,000 then; some 500 to 600 now.

Based on evidence of such a rapid decline, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission closed the statewide season on Florida's largest and most valuable game mammal for 1971–72. (Bear hunting has traditionally been permitted wherever bears occurred. The open season ran concurrently with deer season, but cubs have always been protected.)

Places left open to the taking of bears this year

Florida Black Bear

Photo By William Greer



were only those sections still known to be supporting good bear populations—the Osceola National Forest in northeast Florida and part of the Apalachicola National Forest in the panhandle. The 1971 managed bear hunts are winding up in both places. During the '71–'72 general hunting season, only two of the state's 67 counties will be open to the taking of bear: Baker and Columbia, both claiming some of the Osceola Forest bear habitat.

Commission Director Dr. O. E. Frye, Jr., says, "Closing the statewide season on the black bear will not save it. This is sort of a delaying action that might help keep bears around for a while longer in areas where the population and suitable habitat are present but limited."

Commenting further on the current situation, he emphasizes the inadvisability of closing all of Florida to bear hunting.

"We don't want to stop *all* bear hunting. The areas left open this season, for example, have adequate numbers of animals to sustain an annual legal harvest without undue strain on the resource. Furthermore, we feel the active bear hunter provides the strongest support for conservation of the bear. If all bear hunting were stopped and Florida's bear hunters disposed of their hounds, this great game animal might find itself standing alone—without the strong support of sportsmen—in its time of greatest need. The hunter has always been wildlife's best friend."

One factor contributing to the decline of the bear is the illegal killing of those animals that can't resist commercial beehives. Periodic destruction of apiaries by honey-hungry bears has moved many a mad beekeeper to dispose of the marauder with gun, trap, or poison in spite of a law against such action without first getting a permit from the Game and Fish Commission.

In the past, commission personnel would attempt to trap a particularly troublesome bear and move him. A better solution has been the erection of bearproof bee platforms, for which the commission has furnished plans on request for years.

Each of the elevated wood structures can accommodate 50 hives. It costs less to build than the amount of damage that might be inflicted by a single bear raid on a bee yard. And when one considers that each platform is serviceable for 10 or 15 years, it makes sense to build the platforms if a man is going to run his bee business in known bear country.

Electric fences work pretty well, too, but there are times when a bear's natural urge for a belly full of honey will overcome its disdain for electric shock and it will barge right through the "hot" strands to do its thing.

The platform remains the best long-term solution to the old, old problem of bears versus bees and their keepers.

But, as was implied at the outset, the disappearance of Florida bears over much of their former range cannot be laid solely at the feet of the beekeeper and the game law violator who has killed a few cubs, or an adult bear out of season or at night. Likewise, the modest legal kills by sportsmen haven't extirpated them. The draining and clearing of huge tracts of land for timber production, planting to food crops and pastures, and for real estate and highway construction—all these land uses have cut into former bear habitat, thus driving the remaining bruins into smaller wilderness tracts. And many such tracts can't really be called wilderness anymore because they are so well laced with woods roads for timbering and fire control access. Surely there isn't a Florida bear alive that doesn't know the sound of a gasoline engine.

(*Continued on next page*)

Photo By Jim Reed

King of all he surveys! That's the Florida Black Bear, left, which reaches weights of 600 pounds. The only real enemy they have is man. The cubs are extremely good climbers, right. On their mother's command, they will immediately ascend a nearby tree for safety.

By **GENE SMITH**

(Continued from preceding page)

Generally, the larger the animal the wider its home range requirements and the greater its food intake—both being factors that work against the black bear, which is a real heavyweight.

The average weight of 16 adult males ("boar bears") of the Florida subspecies was 304 pounds; of 12 females, or "sow bears," 189 pounds. The largest bear weighed by the Game and Fish Commission was a male trapped in Duval County in 1954. The animal was not put on the scales until a week after its capture—and did not eat during that period—but it weighed 580 pounds! There was speculation by wildlife biologists that on the day of its capture it would have hit 600 pounds, which is as big as a wild black bear gets anywhere in its wide North American range. (Some zoo-kept specimens have grown fat enough to exceed that weight, however.)

Foods of the black bear vary according to the season and with each animal's whim. An amazing variety of food items have been recorded in Florida: acorns, palmetto berries, virtually every other kind of wild fruit and berry; roots, tender green shoots and twigs, cabbage palm buds and other parts; honeybees and their combs, larvae, and honey; various bugs, grubs, beetles and worms; wild bees and their larvae—yellow jackets, wasps, hornets, etc.; and ants and termites and their eggs.

Higher on the food chain, the omnivorous bear feeds on lizards, mice, snakes, fish, armadillos, and sometimes carrion. Where feral hogs are found, bears take them too from time to time. A pig squealing in the middle of the night in bear woods may very well mean that bruin is about to have pork for dinner, and he'll bolt it down hair, eyes and all!

Domestic livestock is occasionally taken by black bears, but in Florida such occurrences are very unusual in our time. Ample food supplies are available in the wild the year-round.

While normally keeping to the dense woods and swamps, Florida bears still come to town once in a while. Every few years one reads news items about the appearance of a bear in some quiet suburb, and sometimes right in downtown traffic. Naturally, it always causes quite a stir.

I recall reading of at least two such visits by bears along the east coast on U.S. Highway 1. The most recent was around Ormond Beach. On another occasion I was on the scene when a medium-sized bear tore into a screened breezeway at a residence in a Panama City neighborhood one night a few years ago.

The nosey, foolishly fearless bear tipped over a potted plant and then smashed a styrofoam ice chest, apparently in search of a tidbit.

It happened to be the lady of the house who flipped on the porch light and peeked out to see what was up. Needless to say, she practically had a seizure—by her own admission—when she realized there was a bear in her breezeway.

She sounded the alarm and an armed, lantern-lighted crowd soon gathered. It included wildlife officers, sheriff's deputies, city policemen, airmen from Tyndall AFB, and citizens at large. There were even some bear hunters and their dogs—summoned to help rout the interloper and thus restore peace and tranquillity.

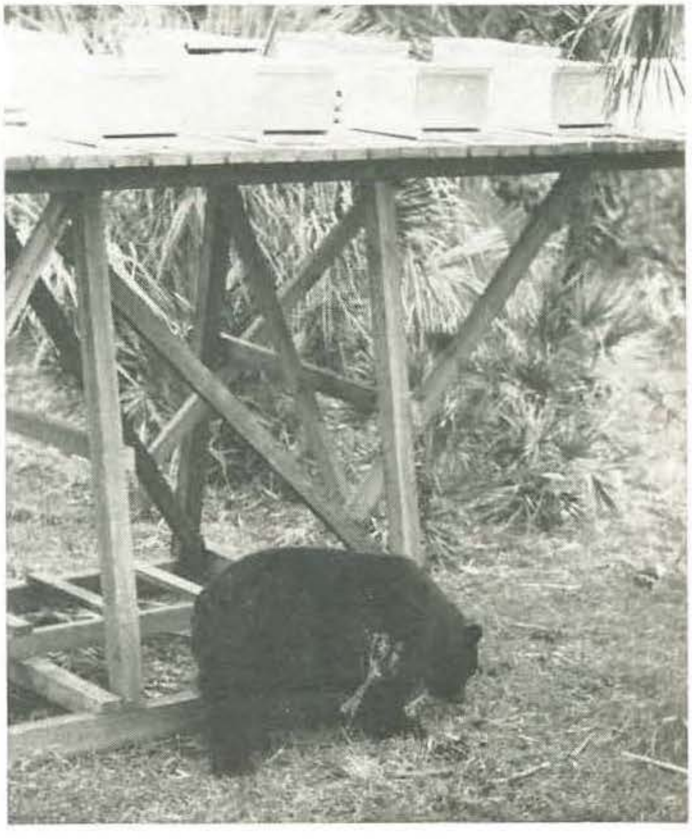
Lucky for the bear, the crowd was dampened thoroughly by a steady downpour before the dogs were able to sort out the trail. (The quarry was seen once in a wooded block off a busy avenue.) At some unknown spot, the bear slipped through the lines and moved back toward the creek swamps and pine flatwoods north of town, whence it presumably came. It was seen no more that night, but a motorist reported having seen a bear the next day—north of the city and making tracks.

The black bear is fast and agile; an excellent climber from the day it is born. It is clever, strong, playful, and subject to sudden changes of mood. One writer described it as "the most amusing, the most ludicrous, the most humanlike, and the most understandable of wild animals."

The bear is a great asset to Florida, not only because it is also a much-valued game animal, but because it is so symbolic of the wilderness heritage we are so steadily losing. ●

Bearproof bee platforms, below, thwart the bruin's best attempts to raid commercial hives. Detailed plans for building the platform are available from the Commission.

Photo By Jim Reed



Brackish Bass

it makes little difference where in the country you seek members of the bass family, it is the brackish waters that often provide the best action

By CHARLES WATERMAN

IT DAWNED ON ME very slowly, but I guess I've had my best bass fishing in brackish water, a part of Florida fishing you don't hear very much about. Marshes and river sections that push right up against the ocean are often ignored by bass fishermen who just simply don't think in that direction. And any water that comes close to the salt is ignored by most of a public that knows the fish are bigger in the ocean, even if you sometimes can't catch them.

I suspect there is a great deal of bass fishing along the coasts that isn't even explored, let alone exploited. The wildest such bass chasing I've done has been near the heads of the rivers that run from the Everglades sawgrass into the Gulf down around Everglades National Park. That gets hot when we have a drought following a period of high water and the sawgrass fish are pushed down to an eyeball confrontation with snook and tarpon.

The St. Lucie River over on the other coast has a similar situation, although it isn't quite so pronounced, and I've caught salt water fish and bass on the same trip there, their overlap changing with rainfall and water discharge. Crystal and Homosassa rivers are noted for both fresh and salt water fishing, although the bass are seldom forced very far into the salt since those rivers are served by big springs that keep the brine pushed back.

These are just a few of the Florida spots for brackish bass. I remember when my wife went tarpon fishing in the Tomoka River north of Daytona Beach and came back with an eight-pound bass. Bob and Stuart Ramsay of Daytona used to know which log had snook and which one had bass over there.

But the best-known brackish water bass fishing is in Currituck Sound up in North Carolina, a place where the guides do it in style and will take you duck and goose hunting in the fall. I'd heard about that for years and finally gave it a try late last spring. Like most borderline largemouth country, it's a shallow water proposition where a porkrind spoon or a popping bug is fished against a grassy shore or over thick weedbeds.

We did it uptown, complete with a cabin boat to take us to the fishing water and a skiff to cast from. We went with Cecil Whitson, who operates out of Coinjock. You can live in Cecil's house, laid out to accommodate fishing and hunting clients.

Like many other Currituck guides Cecil operates the skiff from the center with a pushpole, and a caster can fling from the bow with another in the stern. I don't know how you pole a boat from amidships, but nobody's head gets cracked and the skiff goes.

On the first day we caught seven nice bass, four of them weighing around three pounds, with Cecil apologizing all over the place and saying the wind had ruined the fishing. On the second day we caught seven more fish, although the wind was worse. Five-pound bass are not unusual in Currituck; a seven-pounder is a big one. As nearly as I can learn, Joe Brooks, the Outdoor Life fishing editor, is Currituck champion, having caught an 11-pounder there some years back.

Currituck Sound is so protected from the open sea that tidal action isn't measurable, but when the wind blows from the north the vulnerable Sound shallows up fast. When it blows from the south, it gets deep. Although the salinity varies greatly the water stays fresh enough for the largemouths to reproduce.

There have been some recent changes. For years most of the good fishing was about the duck blinds that dot the place, often pretty impressive structures with sturdy pilings and floors, and separate enclosures for boats. The fishermen would simply go from one blind to another and pay little attention to the marshy shoreline except where it pushed against a wildfowler's hideout.

A few years back there was an invasion of watermilfoil which made cover for fish all over the Sound. There may be more bass than ever, but they don't rely so much on the blinds for residence. In some ways it makes the fishing tougher. We caught fish around some of the blinds and we caught some in pockets in the milfoil and over the native weedbeds that had been there before the milfoil came. We also caught them along the marshy shorelines of low bushes and bulrush. There'll continue to be excellent bass fishing in Currituck, even if it has changed.

Currituck is a colorful place and everybody talks about ducks when the bass conversation lags. My wife, Debie, found a hand-carved but headless old decoy at one of the blinds and brought it home as a decoration for our mansion, but it wasn't the

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bargain I first estimated. When we got back ashore she hunted up a carver to produce a head for it. I guess I was lucky she hadn't found the figurehead of an old ship.

WHEN THINGS ARE really slow, bass fishermen tend to argue about which is the better fighter, largemouth or smallmouth. Since we don't have smallmouths in Florida I tend to be a little defensive about the bigmouths when someone announces a smallmouth will swim through a lineside without even noticing the flying scales.

Several times I have fished where both kinds were present in about equal numbers. Of course the smallmouth likes cooler water, but when the temperature is about right both fish act very much the same in taking a lure. As to jumping qualities, it may be the largemouth comes up a little oftener. When it comes to digging deep the smallmouth does it better and may be a slightly more powerful swimmer.

A typical situation is a shallow shoreline with deep water just a little offshore. The largemouth, which has probably been spending most of its time against the bank, will probably rant around the edge when hooked. If the deep water is available the smallmouth often heads for it, and it's my guess that he is simply heading for home. He probably spends most of his time over deeper water and has been up against the bank on a feeding tour.

These things are largely governed by temperature, of course. Catch a smallmouth in very warm water and he is apt to be a little resigned about the whole thing whereas a largemouth might be full of fight. Reverse the situation and the bigmouth might not show much in chilly water.

Last spring we found both of them in a Maine lake with a rock and gravel bottom, but all of the largemouths were against the shallow shorelines and many of the bronzebacks came booming up from big boulders well out from shore. In some waters you have to look closely to see which fish you have, but those largemouths had the brilliant "rattlesnake" design of Florida fish living over light sand bottoms in clear water, and the smallmouths were typically brown with their dark blotches showing very little.

You'll hear that the largemouth strikes a surface bait harder, but I think it's mostly a matter of his big mouth making more of a pop when he strikes. Of course, the largemouth can take a bigger bait. I have always felt the largemouth is pleased with more commotion than the smallmouth and will go for a noisy thing that might discourage his relative. But nobody knows all about bass and anybody who makes flat statements about how bass act probably hasn't fished for them in many places.

These bass took surface and near-surface lures in the brackish water of Currituck Sound—well-known North Carolina bass area.

ALL FISHING LINES stretch, and the amount they stretch is very important is some uses. Excessive stretching was a fault of much early monofilament. You could be cranking away with the fish still heading for the old stump, and even busting a line when the lure was hopelessly hung up turned into quite a chore. Stretching has been reduced of late. Lack of excessive stretch is one of the advertised features of many kinds of line. But you need some stretch as it takes up shock when a fish strikes, when you cast a heavy lure, or when you bumble a little while playing your quarry. In fishing for record fish with heavy fly tackle there's usually a rule that you must have at least a foot of leader that tests so much, generally 12 or 15 pounds. Some fishermen go to considerable lengths to have just a foot and little more as they figure the more of that small stuff you have the more chance there is for something to happen to it. Other thinking fishermen prefer to have the light stuff a little longer with the contention that the more of it there is, the more it will stretch and the harder it is to break on a sudden jerk.

Dacron is noted for less stretch than you have with either braided or single strand nylon, but dacron is weak in conventional knots and should be used with specially made loops to hold its strength. When you have backing on a reel used with long running fish, it is best that it have a minimum of stretch. Very stretchy stuff can burst a reel when it is wound on tightly and then expands on the spool. The mathematics of increasing pressure on a reel is pretty scary.

Short lengths of line can be pre-stretched to some extent, although most material has a memory that causes it to contract again. Leave it stretched for a long while and more of that tendency is lost.

You PICK UP A newspaper and read of a record fish, but by the time the account has gone through channels of news-gathering, writing, and editing you often can't tell whether the prize was collected with a bent pin, a trotline or a frog gig. When such catches are reported by outdoor writers, they're generally documented pretty well as to lures, lines, and stuff, but the general news people are interested mainly in the size and the name of the fisherman.

That's the way news goes. It's intended for a general public which may have little interest in fishing so I have no legitimate beef, I suppose. After all, the name of a race driver's car carburetor wouldn't mean much to me, but speed fans probably sorely miss such detail.

THE ELECTRIC motors that are doing such a good job on bass boats are seldom used for sustained running. Most fishermen simply nudge the switch with foot or finger to change position a little, thus getting long periods of service from a single battery charge.

But some of the users figure they'll travel long distances under electric power, maybe even trolling with their electrics.

"Electric motors are wonderful," a guy told me. "Mine cost only a hundred bucks and it's changed my whole way of fishing. Of course, I've got a couple hundred bucks worth of big batteries and a good charger."

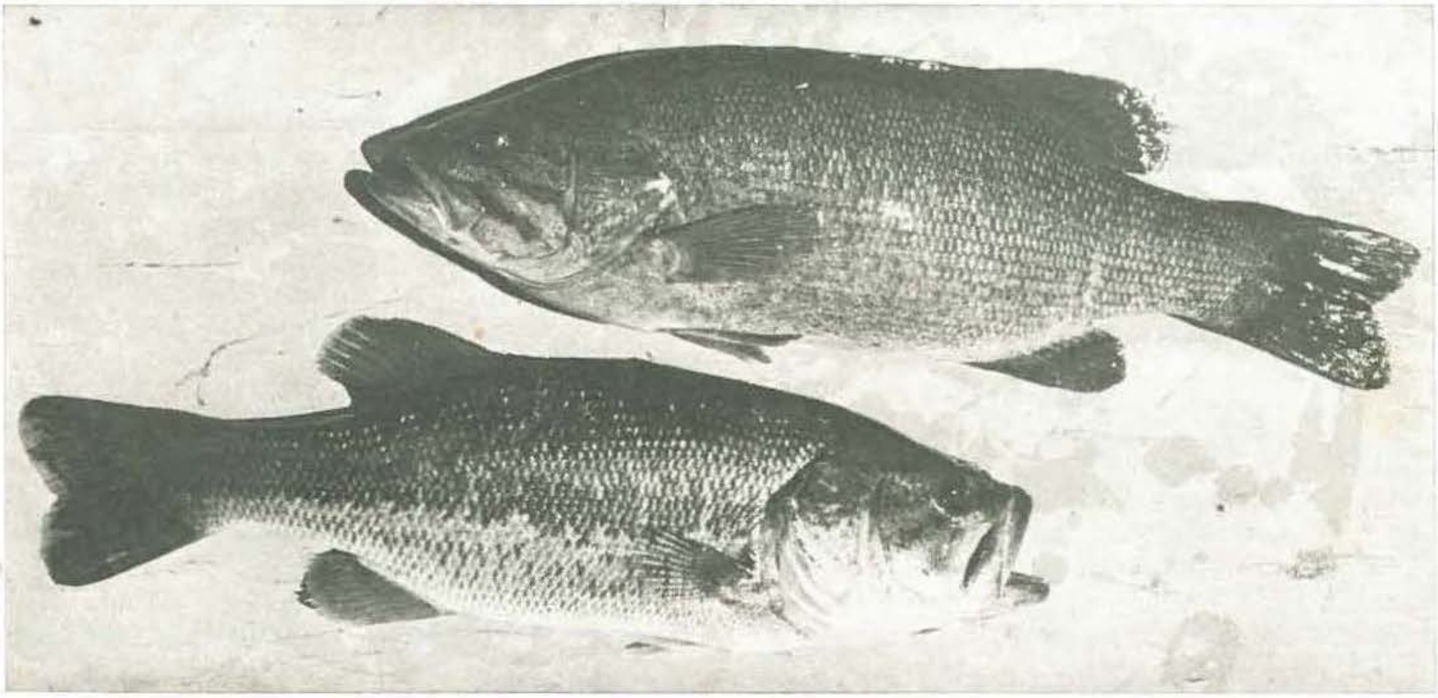
Extra-duty batteries are showing up more and more in bass boats.

HENRY LYMAN AND Frank Woolner, publisher and editor of SALT WATER SPORTSMAN, have long been known for solid and unromantic information about fish and fishing tackle. Down through the years while they built their Boston publication into a national bible of salt water fishing they have written a column, *Tackle Talk*, which is followed by a large share of the coastal fishermen. So critical is their audience that even a typographical error would get a heap of mail.

The phrase, "by popular demand," is used pretty loosely, but in this case I believe it describes the situation. Anyway, Lyman and Woolner (when they produce something you can't tell which one wrote what) have written a book in which they include many of their best columns with a little updating. The publisher is A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., and the cost is $8.95.

This book is good and the information is reliable. If you want highly-colored fishing fiction try somewhere else, but if you want to learn something, you should do it here. I doubt if there's any angler, however proficient, who can't pick up something from these guys. One of the best things about them is that they're trying to learn from everybody else. ●

Smallmouth (top) is slightly chunkier than the largemouth.



hang on to your hat and prepare for some exciting angling action when you bait your hook with a live shiner and cast close to the . . .

Hyacinth Beds for Lunker Bass

By MARVIN WINANS

THE BRIGHT-COLORED bobber tilted first one way and then another as the live golden shiner suspended beneath it swam in aimless circles. Then, with the perversity of its kind, the bait headed away from the edge of the hyacinth bed, towing the bobber on a direct course toward the boat.

Granted, it was wiser for the shiner to avoid the threat of such ideal bass cover, but his actions were not to my liking at all. I reeled in the line and cast again—as closely as I could to the hyacinths.

For a few moments the shiner floated listlessly, probably recovering from the shock of the cast. Then the bobber tilted and moved in the direction of the cover, some three feet away. It moved slowly at first but ended in a rush that pulled it under just as it reached the edge of the bed.

With the bail on my spinning reel open, I watched line peel off slowly as the bass took the bait back under the cover to swallow it. The line stopped and I snapped the bail shut in readiness for whatever was about to happen.

The wait seemed interminable as I held the rod tip low with my eyes glued on a loop of slack line resting on the water's surface. I had just decided to take the initiative when I got the signal I had been waiting for. The line was moving sideways, indicating that the fish still had the bait and was swimming laterally under the hyacinths.

Knowing it was now or never, I quickly, but gently, cranked in the remaining slack and struck as hard as I could, bringing the rod from its horizontal position up and over my shoulder in a hard, fast arc.

I was rewarded with the indescribable feeling of being solidly hooked into a heavy fish. There were several quick, strong tugs as the bass tried to rid itself of the unwelcome restraint. Then, resorting to the tactics that have made his species famous, he came surging out from under the cover in search of open water and fighting space.

The largemouth's first run ended about 25 feet from the hyacinth bed as the fish went airborne. I almost went faint when I saw what was obviously a trophy bass shoot skyward with gill plates flared and mouth wide open, trying desperately to throw the hook.

Only those who have experienced the thrill of seeing a bass in the 10-pound class shaking its head in that first high jump will understand how I felt at that instant.

The bass jumped three more times—an unusual feat for a largemouth of that size—and then decided the open spaces weren't helping him any. He bored straight for a clump of grass, but not with the zip he had when he came out from under the hyacinth mat.

There was no finesse involved now; just muscle against muscle as I fought to keep him from reaching his intended sanctuary. The struggle sapped the last of the big fish's strength, and after a few feeble efforts to detour, it came close enough to the boat for my wife Kay to net.

I rested a few minutes while my pulse returned to normal, enjoying the early morning sunshine and looking over the area in which we were anchored. Although I knew there were several boats on the lake, none were in sight. As is our practice, we had forsaken the grass flats and open reaches of the lake in favor of a hyacinth-ringed cove. This choice had paid off on other occasions, and we were once more being rewarded.

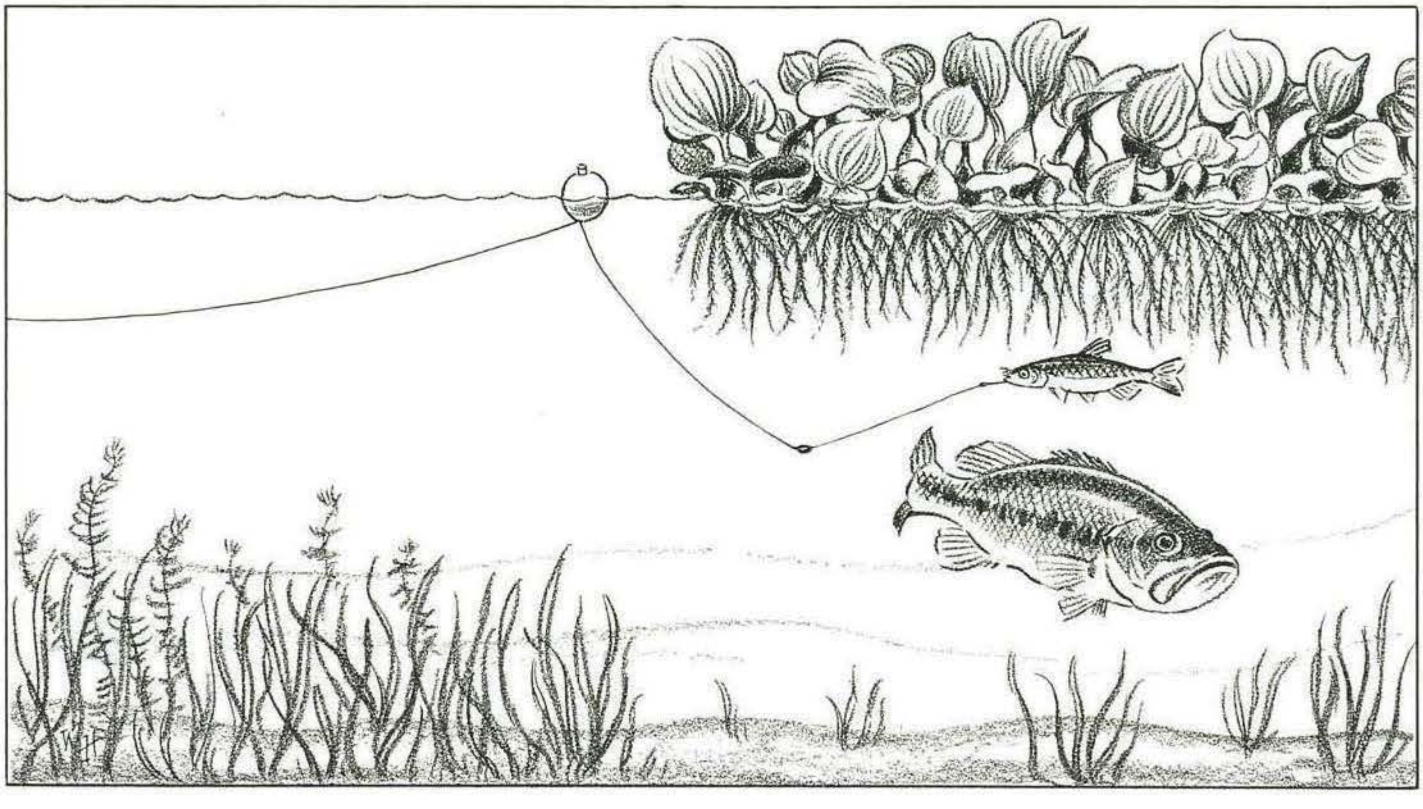
We were fishing one of the many lakes which abound in the citrus-growing area of central Florida. Most of these lakes don't appear on ordinary road maps, and no signs point the way to them. We are especially fond of the lakes in this hilly region because whether they are easy or difficult to get to, they seem to have two things in common: Most of them contain enough lunker bass to keep a fisherman interested, and they offer more seclusion than the better-known lakes. If fishing is good for the working man's soul, so is a little solitude.

After recovering sufficiently from the excitement of having landed the first big one of the day, I baited up with another wriggling shiner and cast again to the same spot. It was obviously a matter of being in the right place at the right time, for within the next half-hour we boated two more large bass. When the action was over we had three beau-

(*Continued on next page*)

This ten and a quarter pound bass, left, was caught with the rig shown below. Providing the bait cooperates a little bit, the split shot between the bobber and the shiner will keep it low enough to be spotted by prowling bass lurking under cover.

Drawing By Wallace Hughes



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ties that later weighed in for a total of 25 pounds. The largest was a 10¼-pounder, the first one we boated that morning.

While this was an exceptional day as to the size of each fish, our "track record" on bass has been consistently better since we learned how to fish the beds of hyacinths that are found in most Florida waters. Like any fishing method, it doesn't work all the time, of course, but I have noticed that when bass aren't feeding along the edges of the hyacinths, they are not usually being caught elsewhere, either.

When I first moved to Florida, I viewed the water hyacinth as the pure nuisance most people believe it to be. Since the beds drift up next to shorelines, it appeared that hyacinths merely made a lot of fishing water inaccessible—which is true in places where they find ideal conditions, cover large, sheltered areas of water, and never move. In most lakes, however, hyacinths more often form a band or "belt" around the shore and thus improve fishing conditions.

Under the normal situation described, this much-maligned plant can be a real blessing in disguise, for if bass can be found anywhere, they can usually be located under and along a band of hyacinths. Also, they frequent the hyacinth cover during more of the year than they do the open shallows or even the deep holes, which means that the knowing fisherman can effectively extend his productive season.

Bass are attracted to the beds because they provide shelter from sunlight, and all experts agree that bass like it dark. And not to be overlooked is the fact that an abundance of natural fish food is to be found in and around the roots of water hyacinths; food both for panfish and small minnows—which attract hungry bass!

Fishing the fringes of hyacinth beds with artificial lures pays off well, too, as many a bass fisherman has learned. When you fish close to *any* good cover the odds are going to improve in your favor. Using live bait, however, permits you to fish *under* the floating hyacinths (when the bait cooperates!) where the bass actually are, and this is bound to be more productive. It's particularly true toward midday when bass are loath to rush out from their hiding places to seize a lure that is usually moving farther away into the open.

Also, larger and wiser bass aren't so likely to make up their minds quickly about any bait. It frequently suits their fancy to take their time and look a morsel over carefully before deciding to add it to their diet.

Photos By Marvin Winans

The bobber is right where it should be—near the edge of the hyacinth bed. The shiner is free to explore beneath the mat of vegetation which is a favorite type of cover for lunkers.

The author's wife holds up her prize of the day—a nine-pounder-plus. The clear water under hyacinth beds allows angler to "ease" bass from under without danger of snags.

The technique for fishing hyacinth beds with live bait is really quite simple. A large, lively shiner—I consider a six-incher to be the ideal length—a fairly large hook, a large split shot placed about 10 inches above the hook, and, finally, a medium-sized bobber are the necessary ingredients. The bobber should be placed high enough above the bait to allow the shiner to move about, the distance usually being dictated by the water's depth, for the bait must not be permitted to reach grass or moss growing on the bottom. Anchoring the boat nearby should give you a clue as to the depth of the water at the edge of the bed.

The method of hooking the live bait seems to be mainly a matter of preference. I hook mine through the lips because I was taught that way by an old-timer who has been fishing hyacinth rafts for some 30 years. Hooking a bait minnow through the back or tail may be equally effective.

The purpose of the split shot is to keep the bait down, thereby discouraging it from hiding in the roots of the hyacinths. Even so, when the bobber stays too long in one place, it is advisable to pull it away from the edge (but not too far) to make certain the shiner isn't hidden by the hanging hyacinth roots. This also tends to stir up the shiner and get him on the move, and this is the time to keep your eyes glued on the bobber!

The beginner will quickly learn that some skill is required to cast close enough that the shiner will take refuge under the hyacinths. One can ruin a lot of baits by casting them onto the hyacinths. Certainly it is preferable to cast a little short than to overcast, for a lively bait will move in any direction and may decide to head for cover at any time. So, if the bobber doesn't immediately snuggle up against the hyacinths, don't get too impatient. If you cast short, give your bait a chance to approach the cover under its own power. The more natural its appearance the better, remember.

The greatest test of judgment and "know how" is what the fisherman does *after* his bobber goes under. I have heard various theories regarding what a bass does after striking a live bait. The most prevalent belief is that it mouths the bait for a few moments, then turns and swallows it headfirst. Sometime during the swallowing process the bass will either feel the hook or take alarm at the unnatural resistance of the line and bobber and start its run.

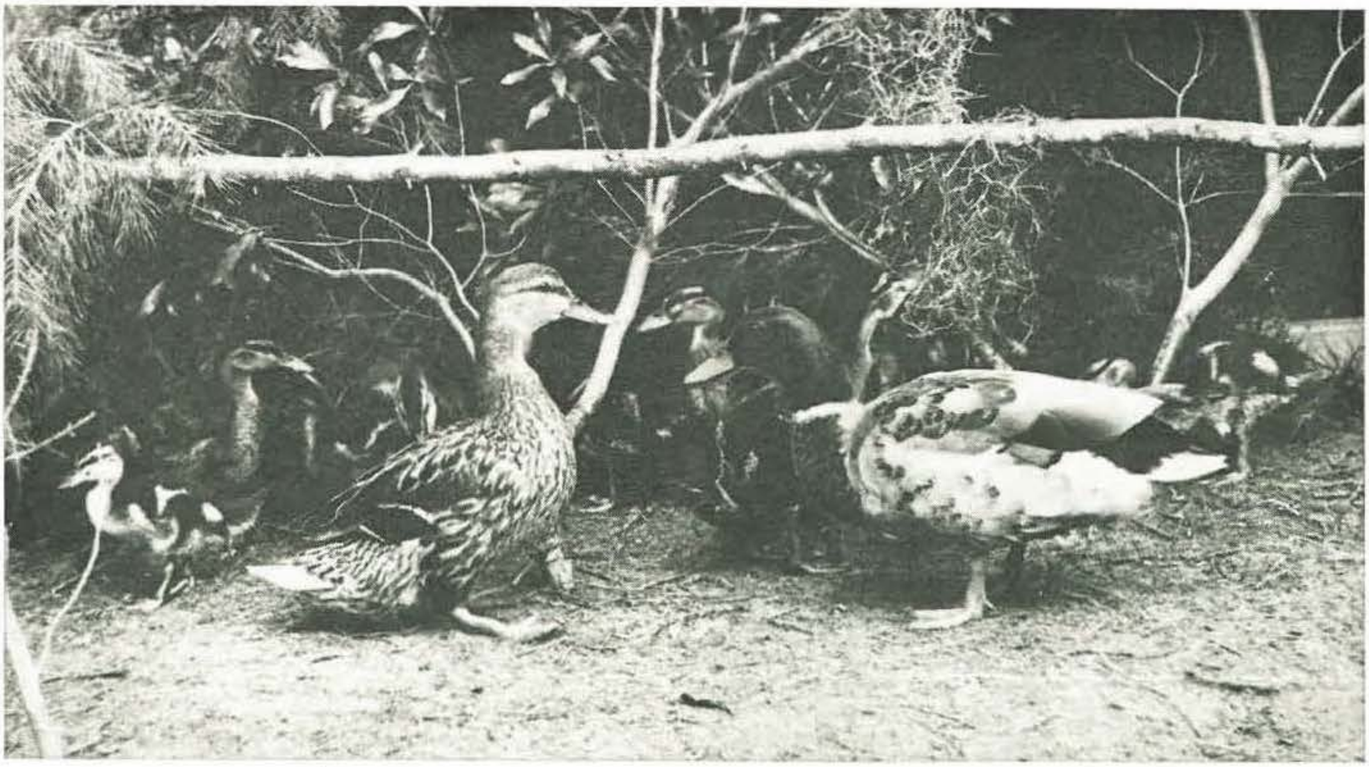
Experience tends to support this theory. I usually wait for this "second run" before setting the hook. However, all bass do not act alike. Frequently one will grab the bait and immediately begin a "panic" run in any direction, sometimes taking a course that will take it around your boat.

Many times I've cranked like mad to get in slack and found the fish was behind me rather than in front of me where the bait was taken. At such moments you can only reel fast, strike fast, and hope enough slack is gone for the hook to be set.

Other times a bass will appear to sulk back under the hyacinths and after a reasonable time (or when your patience wears thin) you will have to take the initiative. In so doing, you're bound to guess wrong sometimes, but that's fishing.

There are periods, of course, when bass can be caught over large areas of a lake, and at such times I like to use plugs or plastic worms as much as anyone does. But there are those other times and situations when the only productive part of a lake or river is close to shelter—and that shelter happens to be hyacinths.

One final and convincing argument in favor of following the fishing method described is the recorded fact that a large percentage of the real lunkers taken from Florida waters are caught in just this manner. So if you're a Southern bass fisherman and you haven't tried turning hyacinth cover to your advantage, give it a whirl. You may take home more and larger fish, and you'll certainly be able to catch bass over a longer portion of the day and during a greater part of the year. ●



if you think some people are for the birds— you're right!

The Young Naturalist

By NANCY CHOIKE

ROBERT DANIELS may have long hair, but he's no hippy. This 18-year-old works hard, even at his hobby—raising game birds in his back yard. Robert has lived near Lake Jackson, north of Tallahassee, for 12 years and has been engaged in game bird farming for the last three years.

His devotion to the conservation, protection and observation of game birds and waterfowl has been a major motivation throughout his life.

To begin his unusual hobby, he purchased two pairs of Ringed Turtle Doves from a pet store. The normal range for these birds is from southeastern Europe to Japan and India, but they have been introduced successully to the West Indies, Miami and Los Angeles areas.

Robert built the birds' pen himself—using poultry wire and covering it with tarpaper to provide shade. It measures 20 x 40 feet and contains a shallow concrete pool supplied with fresh running water from a garden hose. He left the concrete rough-finished so the birds would not slip when entering, and put gravel around it to prevent the birds from tracking too much dirt into the water.

The floor of the pen is dirt, which must be raked and cleaned regularly. Robert spends two hours a day feeding and caring for his birds. The walls of the pen are lined with branches twice a month to provide ample roosting and hiding places.

At the present time, Robert has 17 doves (all descendants of the original two pairs), 6 Bobwhite Quail, 2 Ringneck Pheasants, 6 Wood Ducks and 19 Mallards. Only the mallards and the doves have successfully reproduced so far. A female wood duck did build a nest in one of the camouflage wood duck boxes in the pen, but did not lay any eggs. Both the female quail and the pheasant have laid eggs, but have refused to set. Robert purchased a commercial incubator this past summer and hopes to be able to hatch next year's eggs.

All the birds wander freely within the pen and do not seem to mind human visitors—a direct result of their daily association with Robert and their dependence on him for food. The ducks have established territory in the pen and will peck at a new bird for about a week before they accept it "into the family." The quail, pheasants and doves never display aggressive behavior toward a newcomer, but seem willing to share the pen quite freely.

The wood ducks are Robert's favorites, not because they are so pretty but because they are "not like other ducks." They are very sociable within their own species and often perch in the branches with the doves and rarely visit the little pond. He doesn't think they realize that they really are ducks.

All the birds are still capable of flight—none have had their wings clipped—and the doves are the only members of the pen that can be handled and fed by hand. Robert has no intention of making "pets" of any of his birds because this might interfere with their ability to survive when returned to their natural surroundings. His main interest in the birds is to study their behavior. He releases some periodically to prevent overcrowding in the pen.

He recently released a Red-breasted Merganser since it was the only bird in the pen that is a fisheater, and it required a lot of extra effort to keep it supplied with live shiners.

The mallards seem to become "domesticated" easier than the other birds. In January, Robert acquired two pairs of mallards that were trapped on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge by "Red" Gidden of the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. One of the females produced 15 eggs which hatched in May. During the incubation of the eggs, the other female mallard would "egg-sit" whenever the mother would leave the nest. Robert plans to release most of the flight-ready juveniles at

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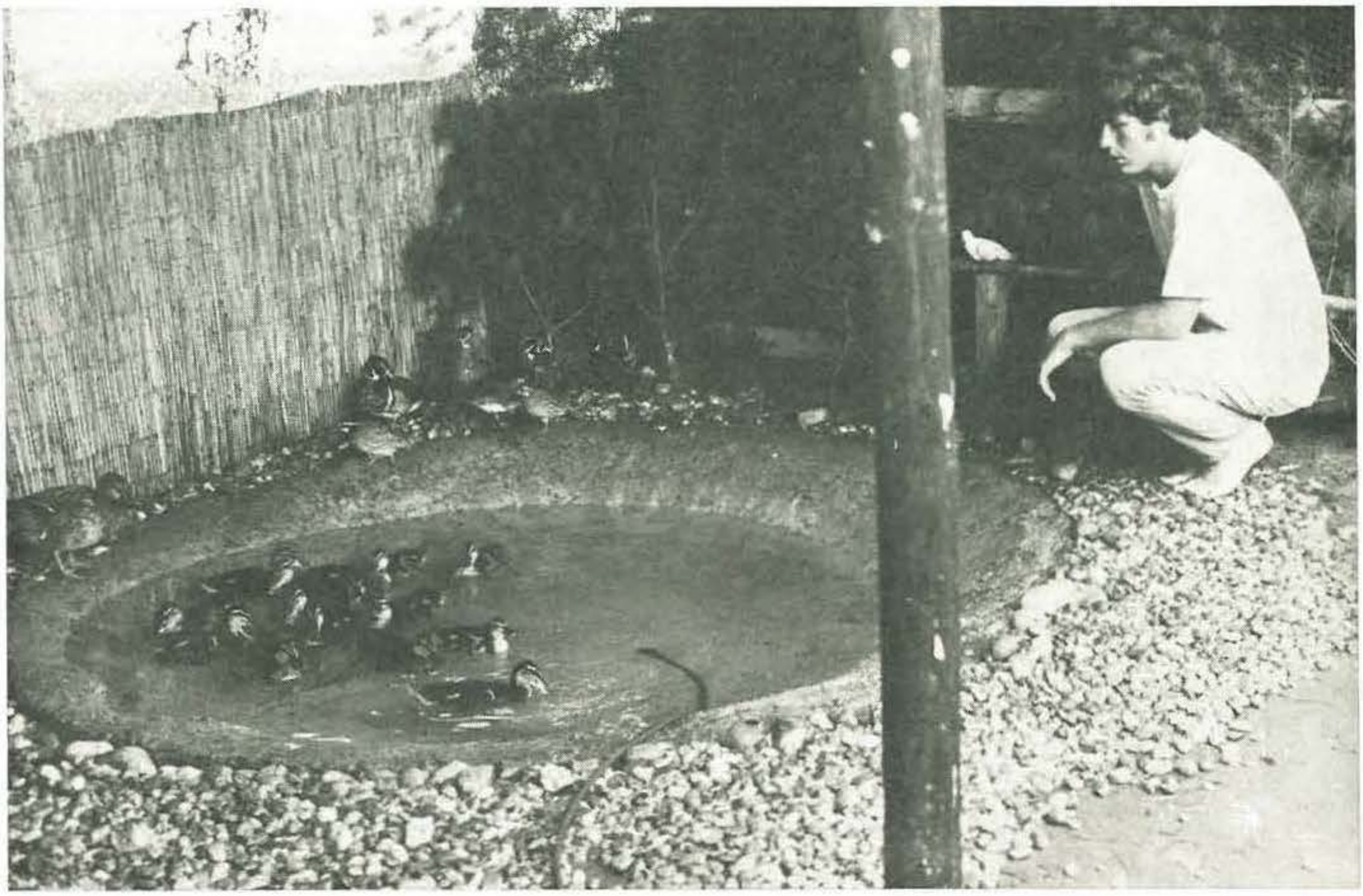
Photos By Nancy Choike

Many chores are involved in game bird farming as a hobby. Robert, left, prepares to rake and clean the pen and duck pool. Mallards, far left, gather for family portrait, but the ducklings seem camera-shy. However, below, they enjoy a pool party attended by Robert, wood ducks, bobwhites, a dove—and even Mom, who watches dutifully from the edge.



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the refuge this fall so they may join the natural waterfowl population.

The mallards are the most pugnacious of the birds and are real hogs at the food trough, shoving other birds away and shoveling in whatever is available to eat. Once they have had their fill, they are quite content to let the others feed.

The birds are fed a combination of chicken feeds and FRM game bird flight feed, plus wild bird seed with plenty of sunflower seeds. Robert also gathers duck weed from the lake and has found that the wood ducks especially enjoy eating grapes.

He figures it costs about $15 a month to supply the birds with food and water, a project he finances by working seven days a week during the summer (four hours a day and 30 hours on weekends) at a nearby fishing camp.

When he is not working or in his bird pen, Robert is either hunting, fishing or wildlife-watching in the woods surrounding his home. During the fall, he is an avid duck hunter—always being "too ill to go to school on legal hunting days." He did miss one day's hunting last fall, however. He arrived in his duck blind on Lake Jackson at 4 a.m. one morning, fell asleep waiting for the sun to come up, and woke up at noon with no ducks in sight.

Robert is very selective about what ducks he shoots—often going all day without firing a shot unless he spots a particular species he wants to add to his collection of mounted waterfowl.

Robert's bedroom is a duck hunter's dream. All four walls are filled with his trophies, and his bookshelves are stacked with back issues of hunting and fishing magazines—including FLORIDA WILDLIFE, of course.

Over the years, he has shot and mounted over 50 ducks—a male and a female of each species commonly found in Florida. Robert pays for these mounted specimens himself, although he does admit to getting "a little discount" from Lett and Wheat Taxidermists in Montgomery, Alabama.

He has one mounted largemouth bass, a 10¼ pounder caught from Lake Jackson, which he "hides" out in the porch. He says it's not really very big, and besides it's just not as pretty to look at as his ducks.

In July, Robert was given a 1½-year-old bobcat which he installed in its own private 10 x 10-foot

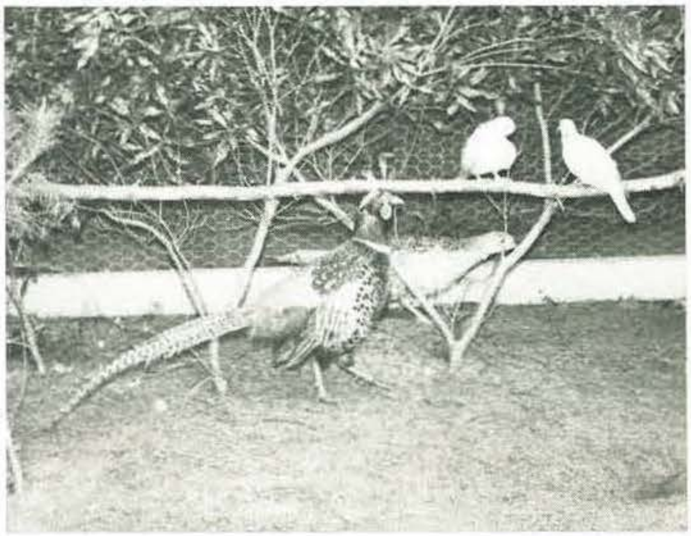
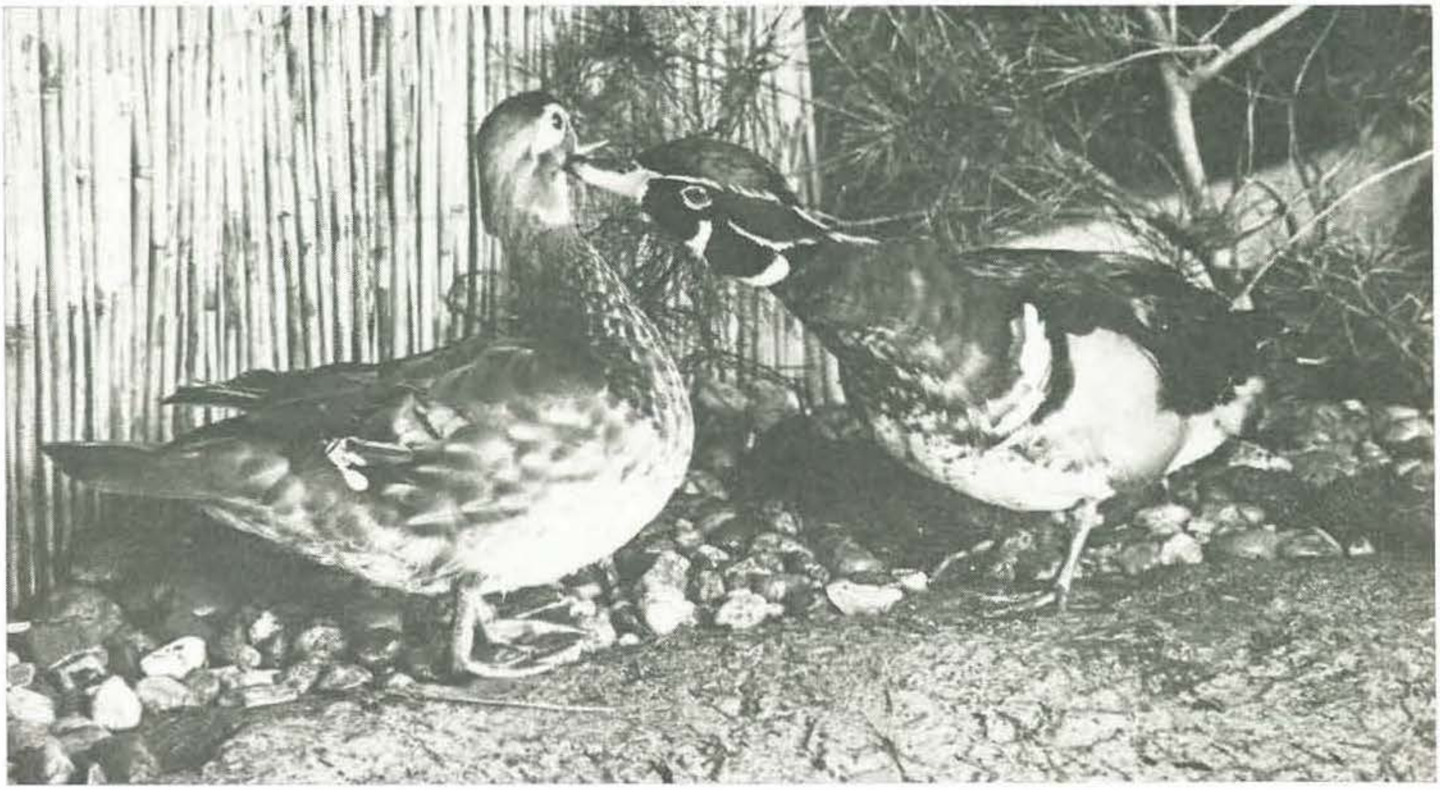


Photo By Nancy Choike

Photo By Wallace Hughes



The male wood duck preens his mate, below, left, and the ringneck pheasants, center left, pass the time of day with a pair of doves. The busy bobwhite quail, below, scurries to join others at the feeding trough, while Robert and a pair of ringed turtle doves pose willingly at right.

Photo By Nancy Choike

Photo By Wallace Hughes

enclosure, only five feet away from the duck pen. The cage is covered with plastic siding to shade the cat, and is built off the ground so he doesn't have to enter the cage to clean it. Half of the floor is open welded wire, and the other half is covered with plywood which can be pulled out of the cage for easy cleaning.

The ducks seem undisturbed by the nearness of this natural enemy, and the cat does not seem to notice the nearby food source.

The bobcat eats rabbits, which Robert traps—he's had a trapper's license since he was 14 years old—plus an occasional chicken. The cat especially relishes *fried* chicken and shares the family meal whenever Robert can manage to raid the icebox.

The cat is pure meanness, although it is gradually becoming used to having humans around. Robert plans to plant some shrubs and trees around the cage to add to the comfort and seclusion of his newest addition.

The biggest drawback to having a game farm in the back yard is the curious people who spot the pens from the road and casually stroll into the yard to have a look—not even bothering to ask permission.

Robert is particularly concerned now that he has obtained the bobcat since it is very aggressive and would not hesitate to bite down on an inquisitive finger.

It became necessary to padlock both pens in July after someone visited the duck pen and left the door open. Many of the birds wandered into the yard, but none of them escaped, even though they are all able to fly and there is an inviting woods close by.

Robert hopes to expand his duck pen to twice its present size and provide a simulated natural, protected habitat for every species of duck and upland game bird. He has been particularly pleased that both types of birds are able to live together so successfully.

The young naturalist is a contributing member of Ducks Unlimited, Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society and the American Fishing Association. He is in his first year at Tallahassee Community College and plans to complete his education at the University of Florida School of Foresty. His ultimate goal is to become a wildlife officer or game biologist with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. ●

Photos By Gene Smith

do we have the right to waste . . .

Those "Worthless" Wetlands

WETLANDS ARE THE MOST versatile pieces of real estate on the face of this earth. They act as sponge, reservoir, filter, factory, nursery, and refuge. They can be a living laboratory, sewage plant, oxygen producer, heat sink, firebreak, erosion control agent, and recreational area.

Wetlands touch all of us directly or diversely.

In man's typical action of usurping every possible acre from nature and making it yield an income, wetlands have become the most abused type of real estate, too. Regarded as liabilities rather than assets, these shallow "worthless" areas are having their energies draglined and drained into oblivion.

But the joke may be on man, for wetlands as productive units may be worth far more than anything man can put in their places. There may be a hollow ring to the immediate benefits derived from their exploitation if these benefits result in inadequate supplies of good water, and the loss of natural areas of high quality.

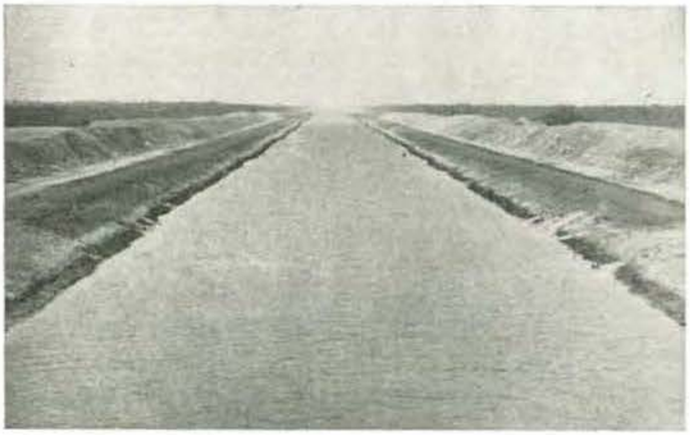
We are just beginning to realize that "wetlands are not wastelands." Faced with the sobering figures that one-third of the total of 127 million acres of wetlands of Colonial America have been drained or destroyed, primarily for agriculture or flood control, man is taking a second look at these lands and their impact. For, once destroyed, wetlands can rarely—if ever—be replaced. (Reasonably, anyhow. One author stated that the two acres of wetlands created at Disney World cost one million dollars per acre!)

Wetlands are areas covered with shallow water on a permanent, seasonal, or temporary basis. The U. S. Department of the Interior classifies them into 20 fresh and salt water categories. In broader terms (and referring to fresh water only) despite the estimation that over half have already been destroyed, our Florida landscape is still dotted with marshes, swamps, and, to a lesser degree, bogs.

By definition, a marsh is an aquatic pasture or grassland, with rushes, grasses, and sedges predominating. The Everglades is the largest example in the world. In contrast, a swamp has woody growth, usually, in Florida, of cypress (Big Cypress Swamp) or tupelo. A bog is a wet area of floating vegetation, and while not as clearly defined or as common as marshes and swamps, are scattered throughout the northwest and southeast sections of Florida. And, of course, any one area may be a mixture of all three types.

One of the many virtues of a wetland is that it acts as a sponge and as a reservoir. With the bulk of Florida's 52.35 inches of annual rainfall arriving in the summer, this water must be retained in such a manner that it can be parceled out throughout the year. Wetlands are an ideal place for this storage, absorbing the water in vast, shallow acreages and releasing it slowly into the lakes and rivers upon demand.

Much of this stored water is forced by its own pressure into the subsoil where water would not otherwise reach. It recharges the aquifers, the porous layers of rock underground in which water is both stored and transmitted and from which we pump our domestic water supply. The amount of ground water stored in the earth within 2,500 feet of the ground surface is about 37 times that found in surface storage in all lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. The surface water storage capacity provides a time delay between the source and the point of underground use; if enough surface water is available, it stretches this availability through the dry season.



Frequently, as is happening along the Gold Coast where a severe water shortage is predicted by 1976, the demand on the underground water supply exceeds the amount of surface water available for recharging the ground water, and the supply is depleted.

With the south Florida exception, the rest of the state has not suffered through a drop in the ground water table. However, on a national scale, in pioneer days, the ground water was 8 to 10 feet below the surface, but now it averages 16 to 20 feet.

According to Darwin Knochenmus, hydrologist with the U. S. Department of Interior Geological Survey (office at Ocala), in central Florida, at least, there has been no noticeable lowering of the water table—in fact, in the spring of 1970, it was the highest it had been in ten years.

While the recharging effect of any surface water depends upon the permeability of the materials below it, Knochenmus says, "One concept that I feel is important and needs to be understood is that wetlands are part of the hydrologic system and what is done to them will affect the system, including recharge. Therefore, all cause-and-effect relations should be understood before changes are made."

Digging canals into these areas destroys the "slow-release" properties of wetlands, and the channelization of streams—1,597 miles worth in Florida at last count—results in a rapid movement of the water towards its ultimate destination—the ocean.

A two-inch summer rain falling on a 10-acre marsh will store 375,000 gallons of water. With water rapidly becoming one of our most critical natural resources, and with each one of us accounting for about 75 gallons a day, the sponge

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Photo By Art Hutt

By ART HUTT

Storing and releasing water is one of the many important functions of wetlands—shown in the untouched state, above left. The destruction of these wetlands by channelization, above, or by dredging and filling, right, interferes with the efficiency and beauty of "nature's sponge."

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and storage aspects of these wetlands are becoming increasingly important.

Drained, covered with a shopping center, runway, or subdivision, the rain that falls there now becomes useless as it rushes seaward. An inch of rain on a typical Florida roof usually means that 750 gallons of water is directed to the sea by a system of eave troughs, downspouts, concrete gutters, and culverts into the nearest lake or river, with no slowdown over natural ground (via nature's system) for absorption.

Where wetlands water is held, another advantage accrues; the area becomes a huge energy and nutrient trap, utilizing sun, water, and nutrients, turning them into a diversity of essential species, incorporating these nutrients into lush undergrowth, acting as a living filter to prevent these nutrients from getting out into our lakes and rivers to foul them any further. Wetlands act as tertiary sewage treatment units, the kind we've been reading about as being essential (and very costly) in the removal of these nutrients. And the wetlands operate at no cost to the public!

Utilized here, these nutrients are harmless; released rapidly into a lake or stream, these same nutrients are bound to produce noxious plants, particularly algae, elsewhere.

Wetlands recycle oxygen in vast amounts through photosynthesis carried on by phytoplankton and emergent vegetation alike.

As "factories," wetlands are unequalled. Even areas under intensive agricultural practices lack the productive ability of these shallow, natural areas. A list of the organisms they support, from microscopic anaerobic bacteria to a Florida otter, would be almost endless. Wetlands serve as home, food source, nursery, and refuge for countless species, many of them on the endangered list.

With wetlands diminishing more rapidly than any other ecological system, many species are now threatened more by loss of their natural habitat than by overhunting or wanton killing. Unhappily, wildlife interests are secondary considerations and must always dovetail into the priorities of industry, agriculture, sanitary disposal, transportation, and some harmful types of recreation.

Marsh and swamp destruction clearly affects the hunting and fishing in Florida.

Waterfowl, on which national hunters spend two billion dollars annually, is big business in Florida, too, but Steve Fickett, wildlife biologist with the Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, estimates 50% of waterfowl habitat destroyed and 25% changed from "good" to "fair" along the Lake Kissimmee-to-Lake Okeechobee waterway, once prime duck hunting territory, through the combined actions of drought (natural) and channelization (manmade), the latter helping to speed the water from the adjacent marshlands into the "new" Kissimmee River, now a straight 58-mile, 34-million dollar ditch to Lake Okeechobee.

Walt Dineen (at that time with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission) and Loren Flagg, fisheries biologists, found that in the Everglades, marshes were the most important factor in the

Photo By Wallace Hughes

Florida News Bureau Photo

A natural marsh is the home of countless wild birds, mammals, and other creatures. All waterfowl, left, must have these wetlands—or they will die. Recreational use of marshes and adjacent waters is one of Florida's greatest attractions—sport fishing and boating, above, are year-round activities.

production of fresh water game fish. Canals next to permanent, but fluctuating, marshes yielded by far the most fish (588 lbs. per acre). Canals with seasonal marshes produced 200 lbs. per acre; with no marsh, 84 lbs. per acre.

In working on the redear sunfish (shellcracker), Bob Wilbur, fisheries biologist, observed that with over half of its marshes destroyed, Florida has lost a large portion of its fish-producing capacity, and Wilbur warns that "unless the remaining marshes are protected, further reduction will inevitably occur."

Wilbur cites the thousands of marsh acres along the Oklawaha Chain of Lakes that have been diked, drained, or converted to muck farms. The Kissimmee River already mentioned. The loss of the vast marshes around Lake Okeechobee. And the 50% loss of the marshes on the lower St. Johns River.

Wilbur states that many game fish species utilize marshes connected to deeper water of rivers or lakes for reproduction. Spawning sites abound, young fry find immediate protection in the vegetation, and there is always plenty of food. As the fish mature, they move into the deeper water.

"With each marsh drained or filled, man destroys at least half an ecosystem—sometimes all of it," Wilbur says.

Although sport and commercial species may be harvested in deeper water, the primary source of their productivity is centered in the connected wetlands.

Wetlands are invaluable as educational tools and for research. They represent an ecosystem that bridges land and water, thereby creating a whole new set of environmental conditions. Changes in the natural succession, the complex interrelationships of the various plants and animals, the extremely high productivity—these are the natural schemes which can be readily observed in this "living classroom."

Citrus and other agricultural interests like wetlands, for they help temper the cold of some of our winter nights. The Florida Citrus Commission estimates that water-bounded groves may be kept 4.4 degrees warmer, thanks to the heat-retaining properties of these wetlands. Since water gives up its heat more slowly than the surrounding land, any cold air mass passing over it is warmed up slightly, a pattern made obvious in the December freezes of 1957 and 1962. Moist air from the wetlands helps prevent desiccation, or drying out, too, which is associated with a freezing condition.

In some cases, wetlands act as firebreaks, they prevent erosion of shorelines by their stabilizing effect, as well as adding to the general productivity of their region.

The recreational aspects of wetlands are almost too obvious to list. For the pure enjoyment of wildlife and vegetation, for the quiet beauty of empty places, there is nothing to match a swamp or marsh. Even if you don't visit the area in person, you still can enjoy it vicariously when an American egret wings over your city or home, for you know without these lands, you would not be having this enjoyment.

Frequently, through tourism, wetlands can produce a greater prosperity than a crop. There is no overhead or upkeep on the attraction, and the incoming money is circulated within the community as high as 15 times before it leaves.

Florida's wetlands trouble began with the Swamp Land Act of 1849 in which fresh and salt wetlands (20,325,013 acres in Florida) were granted the state for the control of floods. Through lack of knowledge or foresight, nearly all those wetlands remaining (15,266,400 acres by the current Fish and Wildlife Service inventory) are now in private ownership and would be extremely costly to repurchase.

Drainage continues at a merry clip, however, but often the purpose is contradicted by the fact.

While on the one hand more land is "needed" for crops, the validity of this concern is questioned by the fact that on a nationwide scale, the federal government pays out a billion dollars a year to keep land *out* of production.

In an attempt to "hold the raindrop where it

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falls" by many state and federal agencies, millions of dollars of taxpayers monies are being made available to other state and federal agencies to *promote* drainage and channelization. It has been remarked that these same agencies could have purchased entire flood plains for much less than the control structures and channelization would have cost, allowing the system to continue in its natural, productive manner, rather than creating stagnant, algae and bacteria-filled pools, dried out wetlands, and unproductive drainage ditches.

The ecological impact of such deeds were not obvious and admittedly, the wresting of land from water is a spectacular achievement, giving the taxpayer a visible return for his money. And when done under the guise of staving off starvation, who could question it?

But we know better now.

Follow a typical example in the draining of some marginal land. Take a marshy area, maybe on the shore of a big Florida lake, which is too wet for agriculture. Rainfall is seasonably heavy and the land remains too wet for cultivation. Diking and draining is instigated. The lake loses its huge sponge and its filter. Nutrients flow freely into the lake, not assimilated as previously by the dense marsh vegetation. Lacking suitable habitat, all fish and wildlife populations decline. With no place to store water temporarily during the rainy season, the lake floods elsewhere, causing property damage and pleas for "control." Or it discharges more water into its outflowing river than the river can handle. Flooding downstream results. More cries for "control."

To prevent this flooding, the river is made arrow-straight and channelized so the water can be carried away more swiftly. River edges become stereotyped banks, with a poverty of plants and animals.

These same banks prevent adjacent lowlands from draining properly—and more ditches are dug to drain them.

During times of river peaks, erosion might occur along the stream banks, the silt ending up in the lake below. In time of low water, there is no constant supply of good water from our "sponge" and the river and lakes of our system stagnate, building up municipal and industrial wastes, with subsequent bacteria and algae increasing, possibly to a point where the system threatens the health of wildlife and humans.

To help insure a steady, controlled supply of water, more structures are erected to create more reservoirs. Etc.!

If man had only realized that it would have been a better long range plan for him to adapt to nature than nature to adapt to man!

Since matter can neither be created nor destroyed, it is a unique fact that there is as much water in the world, a closed system, as there ever was. But our concern is over *pure* water and its *location*: if we keep sucking it out of the ground faster than the rainfall can replace it in our diminishing wetlands where it can recharge the aquifers, it would seem eventually even Florida could end up as a desert.

We've heard it before—that we are going to have to answer to future generations for our indiscretions. With power to change our environment to suit our whims, the moral responsibility to future generations increases.

We must weigh an instant gain against a long term loss. We must ask ourselves if we have the right to destroy the natural values around us. ●

Florida News Bureau Photo

As drought years periodically take their toll, fishes and other aquatic species are forced into canals like this one in the Everglades. These channels serve as reservoirs in which breeding stock stays alive until rains reflood the wetlands.

Gun Models

before parting with a favorite gun model, consider all alternatives—many firearms traded or sold may be next to impossible to replace

By **EDMUND McLAURIN**

IT IS SAID that everyone loves a bargain. Somewhere—if they're all still living—there are about a dozen happy people! They are the people who purchased the firearms I once owned and enjoyed using long ago.

Most of these sales are now looked back upon with deep regret; as mistakes of years long past.

The irony is that I didn't *need* to sell those guns. Another inner sadness is the knowledge that, compared with their tangible values on today's market, I also practically gave them away!

Reasons for selling varied, I recall, but usually it was because I was anxious to get some newly-introduced model and simply disposed of an old one to speed up the new acquisition. In two or three instances, I yielded to fervent pleas from fellows who claimed they didn't have any type of sporting firearm and wanted one so much. I should have stood firm—refused to sell.

From my first fulltime employment, it was my policy to buy at least two guns every year, and I always felt that a brand new replacement in the same model could be had if I ever wanted to go back to a gun I'd sold or traded.

Unfortunately, time and circumstances made that conclusion impractical. For one thing, World War II came along. Suddenly, some fine gun models were no longer produced, and those in existence became highly valued by their owners.

Looking back, I especially regret disposing of certain models—like a Remington Model 12C slide-action .22, a Winchester Model 62 slide-action, a Winchester Model 52 bolt-action sporter, a National Match .30-06 Springfield, a Colt Navy .36 caliber cap and ball revolver marked "Sam'l Colt, New York," and a heavy-barreled Stevens-made .22 target rifle made for Sears Roebuck with "Ranger" barrel stamping.

In addition, there was a fine .45-70 Model 1873 trapdoor-loading Springfield which I bought as a Government surplus item through the Office of Civilian Marksmanship.

The Remington Model 12C slide-action .22 had an octagon barrel and a pistol-grip style stock with curved butt-plate. Mine was fitted with a Lyman 17A front sight and a Lyman 5A tang peep sight. Cost new was $20.10. This particular rifle, or another of the same model in excellent to mint condition, I'd be happy to own again.

A friend has an exact duplicate of the rifle and sighting combination I had. He keeps the rifle on pegs high on a wall of the sporting goods store where he works. I've never known him to shoot it (as I would), or even take it down.

Neither have I known him to put up a high ladder and give the rifle anti-rust treatment. He just lets the little Remington Model 12C stay on the wall and occasionally, I suppose, looks up at it.

Yet, he won't sell!

The rifle, of course, is gradually acquiring specks of rust. I get a sad, sinking feeling every time I go in the store and see this much-desired Remington Model 12C idle and unattended.

The Winchester Model 62 slide-action .22 was no great shakes for looks, but its action was dependable, and its barrel was accurate and long-lived. I sold mine because I liked the hammerless Winchester Model 61 better. I still do, but now regret selling the Model 62 visible-loader.

The Winchester Model 52 sporter was a real field rifle. Its accuracy and smooth action were unsurpassed. But it was a bolt-action and, at the time I let it go, other types of actions were becoming more popular for small game shooting. I simply hopped on the wrong bandwagon.

The star-gauged National Match .30-06 Springfield bolt-action was another Office of Civilian Marksmanship purchase, made as a member of the NRA. It was shot hard in serious competition, including rapid fire stages. Eventually, the barrel wore out and instead of logically having a new barrel fitted and keeping the rifle, I sold it, to my regret today.

The old Colt Navy Model revolver was fun to shoot, but mostly it was lone shooting. Few shooters of my period of ownership cared about firing old black powder guns. Besides, the old cap and ball revolver was slow to reload. But I definitely should have kept it. There has been a revival of interest in shooting muzzle-loading rifles and cap and ball revolvers.

The Ranger Model 50 .22 target rifle was basically the same rifle as the Stevens Model 416-2, but barrel-stamped with the Sears Roebuck trademark of the time.

The late Harry Pope, master gunsmith, designed

(Continued on next page)

(*Continued from preceding page*)

and rifled the prototype barrel that Stevens mass-produced as a major component for the Stevens Model 416-2 and duplicate rifles made for Sears.

My Ranger Model 50 would shoot as well as any more expensive rival made especially for smallbore competition. Its only weakness was the quality of its trigger-sear engagement. The trigger's point of contact with the sear had a tendency to chip most unexpectedly. I finally had a factory-made trigger custom tempered to serviceable hardness, with sear contact point carefully hand-honed. Thereafter, no trouble was ever experienced, and the rifle shot many tight 10-shot groups at 100 yards. I fondly recall how the well-balanced barrel settled down to serious business every time it was aligned on a distant target, whether for a few shots or a full match course.

Another hot-shot .22 target rifle was a Winchester Model 52 heavy barrel, with hooded Vaver front sight and Marble-Goss extension rear peep sight. The rifle was especially selected for me by the late Major John W. Hession and Captain Laudensack of Winchester. With it, I won two state championships in prone firing competition, including DeWar stages.

I let it go because for four-position shooting I found the rifle's approximately 13 pounds of total weight just a bit too heavy for precise aim and hold, especially when firing from the offhand position. Far better for four-position competition was one of the standard barrel Winchester Model 52 target rifles (not to be confused with the Winchester Model 52 sporter), fitted with a Vaver front sight and Lyman 48 micrometer-click rear peep. I still have this one.

I have never especially cared for side-by-side double barrel shotguns, prefering those of single barrel and faster pointing sighting plane. That's why a Fox Sterlingworth Deluxe 12 ga. double barrel shotgun left my ownership. Today, I'd like to have it back as a conversation piece and for occasional use.

Then there was a Winchester Model 97 hammer-style pump gun whose faithful service and quality were discounted in a moment of weakness.

The Model 97's barrel metal was at least twice as thick as present day shotgun tubes, and its smooth shell-feeding action matched its barrel performance. The old Model 97 killed a lot of game, especially waterfowl.

I let it go in favor of a Remington Model 31, a change that I never regretted in my field shooting —only in the sense of not holding on to the faithful Winchester Model 97 when acquiring the more modern Remington Model 31. I subsequently bought an Ithaca Model 37R Deluxe but kept the Remington. These two shotguns have been real joys.

Some of the formerly-owned models I am planning to replace. Fortunately, THE SHOTGUN NEWS, a tabloid newspaper for gun buyers and sellers, provides a logical media for finding them. It is one of the most unique publications in the world.

Known as "The Trading Post For Anything That Shoots," the semi-monthly paper goes all over the world.

Evidently, postal employees handling mail like to read THE SHOTGUN NEWS too. Once my copy was two days late. When I inquired at the Post Office and insisted that search be made because I needed the issue (every subscriber *needs* each new issue, as every issue advertises at least one item he wishes to buy ahead of someone else!), the undelivered copy was found in the hands of a mail-sorting clerk on coffee break.

What makes THE SHOTGUN NEWS so unique is that it contains *only* classified and display advertising—for an average 80-page (size 11¼ x 16) issue. There are no editorials or by-lined columns.

Most of the advertisements relate to firearms for sale or wanted, but there are also numerous display ads of firms that specialize in Army surplus, gunsmithing services, firearms technical books, odd lots of ammunition or hard-to-find obsolete amunition, ancient armament and military clothing, gun cleaning items, estate liquidation of firearms collections, and countless other categories of interest to gun lovers.

State gun collector associations use the publication to give advance publicity to scheduled gun shows. These ads serve as a valuable guide as to where and when gun shows will be held in different states.

Just as proofreaders and typesetters have a written symbol language all their own, so, too, do shooters who regularly read or advertise in THE SHOTGUN NEWS. It takes a basic technical knowledge of gun terms to correctly understand some published ads.

For example, "Browning O&U, 12 ga., 28", M and IC, sol. rib, exce. plus and all original, with inspection, $225.00," describes an over-and-under 12 ga. shotgun of Browning manufacture, barrels 28 inches long, one barrel Modified and the other Improved Cylinder, a solid raised rib, condition a little better than excellent, and no modifications or changes in the gun's original components and measurements. Buyer has the privilege of opening shipment on receipt and examining the gun's true condition before paying collect on delivery charges.

One reading "Selling 52HB, 77A, 48 rear, excellent blue and wood, perfect bore, adj. f.e. stop and butt-plate, MOA accuracy, $100" refers to a

Model 52 Winchester heavy barrel target rifle of .22 caliber, fitted with Lyman 77A scope height front sight and a Lyman 48 micrometer-click rear peep sight. The outside of the rifle, both metal parts and stock, shows little wear. Bore looks new. The model has a fore-end plate into which a hand stop can be located at any desired point, depending on the length and best point of balance of the shooter's supporting arm. The butt-plate is adjustable for desired shoulder fit. MOA means that the rifle will group shots into a square inch at 100 yards if the user can hold and aim it steadily enough to realize that potential. Payment by the purchaser of carrying charges on receipt, without pre-acceptance inspection privilege, is implied and assumed.

While most of the gun ads take serious vein, humor and pathos see print, too. Consider the background story and frank confession of one advertiser: "My girl suddenly married another guy. I want to swap a ½ kt. top quality diamond ring for a good hunting rifle, which I should have bought in the first place. (Name and address.)"

Gun talk and gun-trading are common in hunting camp. If you have a favorite model, better to keep it than sell or trade and regret it later. Some old models are gaining in value.

Occasionally, someone buys an ad to express his belief that we should adhere to the principles of good citizenship that made this country great.

Appearing in a recent issue of the NEWS is a display ad paid for by Frank L. Samara, Jr., life member of the National Rifle Association. His 8-inch, two-column-wide ad advocates continued respect for our Flag.

Samara has a limited number of reprints available for the asking when a self-addressed, stamped envelope is sent to him at 674 Franklin Ave., Nutley, N. J. 07110.

Until enaction of the Federal Firearms Act of 1968, mail-ordered firearms could be shipped direct to a purchaser. Now they must be shipped to a holder of a Federal Firearms License and recorded, unless a firearm is being shipped or received for repair or custom gunsmithing. (There is a provision in the Federal Law—Section 178.147, Repair or Customizing of Firearms—for such legal shipments.)

Persons ordering firearms by mail now make prior arrangements with some local, Federally-licensed dealer for acceptance of shipment, and willingly pay a nominal service charge for the extended courtesy.

On the other hand, some dealers bitterly dislike mail-ordered firearms, and flatly refuse to cooperate. This is understandable because some of the mail-order sale prices often are below what they themselves can sell under franchised dealer setups.

Whether you want to buy a gun or sell one, or simply like to read ads to keep up to date on new or still-available good used guns, each issue of THE SHOTGUN NEWS is fascinating reading. I never cease to marvel at the publication's scope and effectiveness.

Whenever I need or simply want some item I cannot find locally or in catalogs, an ad in THE SHOTGUN NEWS will usually get results.

Right now, I am considering placing an ad for a no-longer-made Remington Model 12C .22 caliber slide-action repeating rifle, the model with octagon barrel and pistol grip stock, in excellent-to-perfect condition, and one of those yesteryear small shooting gallery setups complete with rows of moving duck targets. (As I mentioned in the August issue, there was one in a secondhand store near me a while back, but it was gone when I went back after deciding to purchase. I simply delayed decision too long.)

Locating items I need is just one reason why I continually find the columns of the NEWS so interesting and helpful. You will, too.

On request, the publisher, Snell Publishing Company, Columbus, Nebraska 68601, will send you a free sample copy. ●

CONSERVATION SCENE

Litter Collection Awards

Scout Troop #12 of Lutz (Hillsborough County) was named third place winner in a recent nationwide Boy Scout litter prevention contest. The troop will receive $200 in scouting equipment from Owens-Illinois Inc., sponsors of the contest.

The contest was developed to support and stimulate enthusiasm for Project SOAR—an intensive year-long environmental improvement effort sponsored throughout 1971 by the Boy Scouts of America, and extended recently through 1972. Project SOAR stands for "Save Our American Resources."

National winners were selected by a screening committee at the corporation's headquarters in Toledo, Ohio. First place of $500 in merchandise was won by Troop #46 of Lynchburg, Virginia, and second place of $300 in merchandise was won by Troop #433 of Greenhills, Ohio.

More than 1,100 Boy Scout troops throughout the United States, representing about 30,000 boys, participated in the anti-litter contest.

The anti-litter accomplishments of the troops were judged on the basis of significance, effectiveness, group effort and uniqueness—as documented in a "Record of Accomplishment" submitted by each participating troop.

More than 90 Owens-Illinois plants throughout the country participated in the program by nominating local winners, who then became eligible for national awards. Each plant offered assistance to the scouts in such things as troop-sponsored clean-up drives; litter hikes; troop education programs; anti-litter displays; parades, and recycling.

All local winners received $25 in scout equipment. In addition to the top three national winners, 20 fourth-place winners were named. Each fourth place winner will receive $100 in scout equipment.

The Florida troop captured third place with a recycling program for metal, paper and glass containers collected along more than 50 miles of highways.

To aid them in their litter collection efforts, the troop created a "litter gitter"—a brightly painted trailer for collecting highway litter—complete with a motor-driven can-smasher designed to crush cans to reduce their bulk in the trailer.

Florida Acres for Eagles

Two Florida real estate developers have decided that homes for eagles are more important than homes for humans.

Dick Bonds was already knee-deep in a new housing development outside Orlando when company architects told him they'd sighted a family of bald eagles in some woods next to what would soon be a golf course fairway. The architects had watched the two adults and one fledgling long enough to know that the woodland nest was their home.

Company president Bonds conceded that the eagles were there first and designated 32 acres of would-be housing lots around the nest as a sanctuary. One hundred homes housing 350 people had been planned for the wooded area whose potential value was put at $620,000.

To further discourage any molesting of the eagles, Bonds put a moat around the site and altered plans for the adjacent golf course.

Bonds admits that he didn't arrive at the decision without enduring some agony: "It was a tough decision to make in that there is a lot of money tied up in it." But then he recalls the first time he went out to see the eagles.

"I saw them from a distance; it was late in the afternoon. The sun was setting and they were wheeling around a lake. They were beautiful, just beautiful."

A similar situation was handled a little differently by the Marco Island Development Corporation on Marco Island, south of Naples.

Four new custom-built nesting platforms, especially designed for the American bald eagle, have been completed on mangrove keys surrounding the island.

For years a number of pairs of American bald eagles have nested on the island, the surrounding keys and the nearby mainland of southwest Florida. At the last count in early 1971, four eagle nests were active on Marco Island alone. In one nest, two eaglets hatched and learned to fly.

Both eagles and ospreys have occupied artificial nests in other parts of the country and if these are successful, more will be built.

The platforms were constructed on top of used utility poles donated by the Florida Power and Light Company. The sites are at least one mile apart since eagles do not care to share homesites.

The construction of artificial

eagle nests is one part of a five-year, $650,000 program for environmental management and research at Marco Island.

Giant Snail Invasion

A NEW infestation of the giant African snail—one of the world's largest and most unusual home and garden pests—has been discovered in North Miami, Fla., the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today.

The giant African snail is a foreign pest that grows to over a foot in length. The pests feed on a wide variety of plant life, including flowers, leaves, fruit, and cultivated crops. The snails, particularly disliked by homeowners, may eat house paint and stucco, disfigure walls with their slimy trails, get caught in lawn mowers and, due to a preference for humid conditions, may foul the machinery of window air conditioners.

The new infestation is one of three in the North Miami-Hollywood, Fla., area (these are the only infestations in the continental United States). Within 11 lots on a single block, inspectors of USDA's Agricultural Research Service discovered 1,000 eggs and numerous snails from one-half to five inches long.

The three infestations are quarantined as part of a cooperative Federal-State program to eradicate the pests. Once a month, each of the 159 infested properties is treated with a pesticide bait that is attractive only to snails. All properties on which live snails have been found in the last six months are also sprayed with a carbaryl-water solution at the rate of two and one-half pounds of chemical per 200 pounds of water. Carbaryl is a nonpersistent pesticide that is low in toxicity to humans, birds, fish, and other wildlife.

ARS and Florida plant protection inspectors also physically clean up all infested properties, removing plant and manmade debris, sealing holes in patios and lawns, and otherwise eliminating hiding places for snails. This cooperative treatment and cleanup program has proven successful, reducing the population of the original two snail infestations to the point where only 32 live snails were found in the four months preceding the discovery of the new outbreak.

The new infestation is located three miles southwest of one of the original infestations. ARS scientists theorize that the outbreak is probably the result of a snail being carried out of the quarantined area by a child.

The snails were brought to this country in 1966, when an eight-year-old returning from Hawaii carried two pet snails hidden in his pocket. The child later freed his pets in the backyard of his grandmother's North Miami home.

Each giant African snail has both male and female reproductive organs and is capable of laying up to 600 eggs a year. In 1969, when ARS scientists conducted the first survey of the North Miami-Hollywood infestations, they found 14,000 of the pests. One housewife reported gathering 250 snails in her backyard in one half hour.

AFB Conservation Award

TYNDALL Air Force Base, Florida has won the Secretary of Defense Conservation Award for 1970, the Wildlife Management Institute reports. The base provided recreation for more than 107,000 persons last year with activities which included picnicking, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and camping. The awards committee was composed of a Department representative and five nationally known conservationists. Two runner-up awards were presented to Fort Devens, Mass., and Fort Hood, Texas.

Ob-Scene of the Month

Photo By Gene Smith

the ol' swimming hole

DINOSAUR ALLEY

a walk back through history

By MAX HUNN

DO YOU HAVE a strong set of nerves?

Would you like to visualize what your caveman ancestors encountered daily as they roamed through primeval forests? Then visit Dinosaur Alley on the outskirts of Port Orange, a little Florida east coast town south of Daytona Beach on U.S. Highway 1.

If your heart doesn't skip a beat as you follow a woodland path in a typical, densely shaded Florida hammock and encounter the life-size replicas of the monsters of millions of years ago, you, indeed, have nerves of steel. Most people can't refrain from stepping backwards at first—perhaps a throwback to the prehistoric days when such a reaction was necessary for self-preservation. Ancient hunters had a rough life—not quite the lighthearted sort of lark depicted by the likes of ol' Alley Oop or Fred Flintstone.

These concrete critters, built to scale and situated in the hammock setting, seem almost alive. If one snarled, you wouldn't be surprised—just scared stiff! They are the centerpiece of the Old Sugar Mill Gardens, a onetime commercial attraction, now a public park operated by Volusia County. There is no entry fee.

Dinosaur Alley also is famous as the location of an old Spanish mission and of a sugar and indigo plantation dating from the days when Spain ruled Florida.

The nerve-tingling dinosaurs were designed by Perry A. Sperber, M.D., of Daytona Beach, who succeeded impressively in picturing the primitive world of around 100 million years ago.

To make the display authentic, he secured the best possible models, studied all available literature, and spent hours studying the exhibits in the

dinosaur rooms of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

The concrete monsters were designed first on a drawing board and then full-size models, with framework of steel rods and wire mesh, were used to cast the replicas. The larger ones were cast on the grounds; the smaller models were made at a nearby concrete casting plant and transported to the Gardens.

Wandering down Dinosaur Alley, you encounter triceratops, a three-horned vegetarian that lived 80 million years ago; dimetrodon, a dorsal-finned lizard that roamed the planet some 120 million years ago; stegosaurus, another vegetarian, and one of the first of the dinosaurs, that lived 125 million years ago; and the King of the Dinosaurs, *Tyrannosaurus rex,* a carnivorous creature and one of the last to go—a mere 80 million years ago.

Dinosaur Alley, however, isn't the sole point of interest in the Gardens. The entire area is steeped in interesting and much more modern history. Here occurred the Battle of Dunlawton during the early days of the Second Seminole Indian War.

This engagement, in January 1836, followed the earlier destruction of the plantation. It occurred when a detachment of soldiers under the command of Maj. Benjamin Putnam attempted to retrieve supplies left at Dunlawton. The forage party found the plantation in ruins but the cattle pen full. The soldiers ambushed some Seminoles returning the next day for the cattle, but the noise of the skirmish attracted a larger group of Indians nearby, and the outnumbered soldiers were forced to retreat.

The burning of Dunlawton was but another chapter in the section's long and lurid past. Historians are uncertain of the mission's exact founding date, but most believe it was established by Franciscan friars around 1625. The peaceful mission of its founders didn't prevent it from being frequently involved in bloodletting, however.

After a century of missionary work—not always peaceful, Spanish history shows—Governor Moore of the English colony of South Carolina, aided by Creek Indians, invaded this section of Spanish Florida and destroyed the friars' work and structures. The plantation was rebuilt as a sugar, indigo, and rice operation during the period of English control of Florida. It developed into a financially successful sugar plantation and continued to flourish under the Spanish and American flags until the Seminole Wars.

Historical records show Patrick Dean established a 995-acre plantation here in 1804, operating it successfully until he was killed by an Indian. The property changed hands four times until 1832, when the land was purchased by the Anderson brothers, who moved to Dunlawton from their plantation on the Tomoka River farther north.

The Andersons were successful sugar planters until the Seminoles applied their torches. But the plantation still refused to die. In 1846, it was rebuilt and operated until after the War Between the States. Confederate supply units obtained sugar from the mill for the Boys in Gray. Several ancient oaks under which they camped are now known as the Confederate Oaks.

Wandering today through the peaceful, shaded grounds—which are particularly beautiful when the flowers are blooming—you see slowly weathering mementos of the plantation's past. The indigo vats are still outlined, although time is gradually obliterating them. The huge boiling kettles used in sugar refining still nestle beside the remains of the brick furnace and refinery building. Rusting and overgrown with vines, the old cane-squeezing machinery still stands, possibly the same press that survived the Seminole flames more than a century ago.

Large signs detail the history of the various parts of the plantation. Taking the few minutes required to read them makes a visit much more interesting. It's a place that should be absorbed slowly.

You can make an intriguing journey down Dinosaur Alley, with interesting glimpses of early Florida history—for nothing. And fortunately, you won't be crowded or rushed. The area is not highly publicized despite its unusual prehistoric statuary, its natural scenic beauty, and its interesting history. ●

The vicious looking creature at right is a replica of a dimetrodon, one of the first of the dinosaurs which roamed the earth some 120-125 million years ago. A visitor to the Old Sugar Mill Gardens, left, studies the concrete figure of a stegosaurus. Above, left, a young viewer meets tyrannosaurus. He became extinct about 80 million years ago.

Photos By Max Hunn

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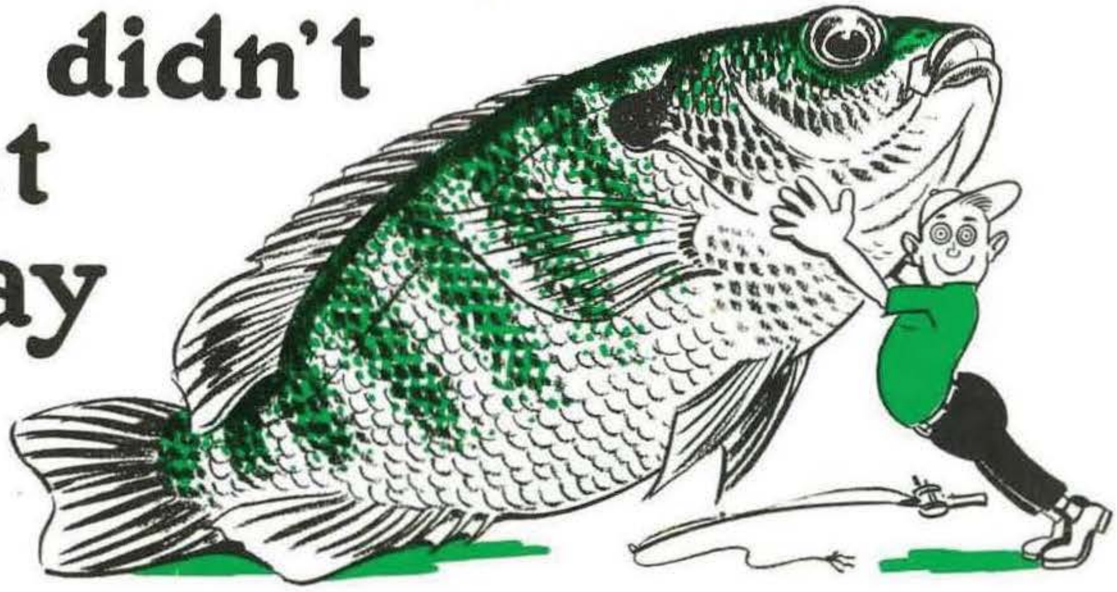
For that BIG ONE that didn't get away



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